Marjorie Stewart

THE GIRL WHO HELPED PUT RADIO ON A BALANCED DIET

Rosa Strider Reilly

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND

Then the whistle blows and the crowd moves off across the fields and into the mountain country, Mr. Swift leading the way, and talking through a megaphone about trees, birds, flowers, geology, folklore, history, everything that is suggested by the natural things along the trail.

Then there is lunch by a woodland spring, each person bringing his own provender, and there is a great camp fire where steaks and corn are roasted and coffee is made. Then, as the flurry of lunch is over and the fire has settled into glowing embers, a song leader, sometimes a man, sometimes a woman, will start singing old folk songs, songs of romance, patriotism, love. Or Mr. Swift will gather the group about him and give a short talk about some phenomenon of nature.

In the evening a railway station, trolley line, or bus line is reached and the Yosians depart for home. Cheeks are red, eyes bright, shoulders braced, lungs full of oxygen, and hearts happy. From the highlands of the Hudson, the Ramapos, the Orange Mountains, from Long Island, Jersey, Westchester, the Yosian groups are converging on New York, bringing back with them a little of the woodsy freshness, the peace of silent places, and the unutterable beauty of the wilderness, to help them through another week

According to Mr. Swift, the Yosians have no set organization, and there are no dues or responsibilities of membership. Anyone in the world may become a member, irrespective of race, creed, or education. "More than anything else," says Mr. Swift, "the Brotherhood is a state of mind. It includes numberless young women from offices of big corporations, teachers, clerks, and young men from all walks of life, from street-car conductors and laborers to bank clerks, heads of departments in business houses, writers, and a few college professors."

Scarcely a day passes that Mr. Swift's desk is not piled high with letters from enthusiastic Yosians in every part of the world, including even China, Japan, India, England, and France. I know, for my desk is not more than ten feet from his. Mr. Swift is one of the busiest of men. Fifteen or eighteen hours a day on this job of his is not infrequent. And Mr. Swift's eyes twinkle as he excuses himself by saying, "You see I made myself this job out of my hobby . . . and it has turned out to be a pretty big job."

DOROTHY WORTHINGTON

The Girl Who Helped Put Radio on a Balanced Diet

IT WAS early in 1921. A golden-haired girl sat in the living-room of a farmhouse in western Pennsylvania, the phones of a homemade radio set fastened over her ears. Her father stood by her. He had built the crude little set for his blind daughter, hoping to add a bit of variety to her quiet life. She had educated herself and tried to carve out a niche in the world's commerce, but, handicapped by ill health and lack of sight, she was home convalescing after nearly a year's invalidism.

"How does it sound, Marjory?" her father asked, a little nervously. It was his initial effort at radio construction and Marjory was the first one to test the set.

The program to which the girl was listening was "dead music"—that is, the broadcasting of a victrola record or a piano roll. There was little else but this type of music in those days, for radio was but a huge, young force feeling its way into coherence and beauty.

"How does it sound?" the father asked again.

The girl tore herself away from the radio, jumped out of her chair, into her father's arms. "It's wonderful. Unbelievable." And then she added softly: "At last, I believe there is a place in the world for me."

And there was. That girl was Marjory Stewart. And the same enterprise and grit which enabled her to work her way through university and seek a job in New York City, led her less than eighteen months later to create for herself an entirely new position—that of radio critic, at Station KDKA, Pittsburgh.

Twenty-seven years ago, in the little town of Perrysville, Pennsylvania, Marjory Stewart was born, one of a large family of strong farming folks. But tragedy hovered around that birth. A week later she was pronounced blind.

DRAWN BY C. D. BATCHELOR

Blind Marjory Stewart, who was radio's first critic

At an early age the child was sent to the Western Pennsylvania School for the Blind, at Pittsburgh. Almost immediately she showed a tremendous interest in literature and a deep love for anything dramatic. Later on, encouraged by her English teacher, she tried for and won a college scholarship, which gave her free tuition at the University of Pittsburgh.

"I was all ready for my first day at university without the faintest idea of how I was to acquire my daily assignments," Marjory explained, "since at that time there were no textbooks at the university written in Braille."

At Assembly the first morning Miss Folk, an instructor, stood up and said to the co-educational gathering: "A blind girl has come among you. Her only hope for a college education remains with you, her fellow students. If you will read to her for a small part of each day, she can achieve her desire."

The response was overwhelming. Never during the four years did she lack for anybody to read to her. After four winters of study and four summers of teaching the adult blind the Braille system of reading, Marjory was graduated from the university—an honor student.

Marjory Stewart got a job in New York City, but after a year of working she had a nervous breakdown and was forced to return home, where she lay helpless for nine months. It was during her convalescence from this illness that she heard her first radio program and resolved to become a part of this vast, new force.

Procuring a letter of introduction to Mr. J. C. McQuiston, Publicity Manager of the Westinghouse Company, she called on him and asked for a position.

McQuiston was about to turn her down flat. But suddenly it occurred to him that because this girl's sight had been denied her, her other sensibilities were quickened many-fold, and undoubtedly she would be able to detect flaws in the radio programs which a physically sound person might pass over or never recognize at all.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he said. "You listen in every night for a month, and furnish us each morning a critical report on the previous evening's entertainment. At the end of that time we'll either dispense with or retain you if we think you can be of value to the company."

So Marjory hired a little room in which the Company installed a radio, before

which she sat, patiently working out constructive reports and programs. At the end of her first month she was definitely engaged as a radio critic.

The changes brought about by her efforts are too numerous to detail, but among other things, it was her job to help the radio announcers perfect their art—to coach and criticize their voices and their English.

It was because of her repeated efforts, too, that a time limit of fifteen minutes was placed on each speaker. And so, today, with few exceptions, no one is allowed to speak longer than this specified time.

Also, on Marjory's advice, no opera, today, is ever broadcast until the announcer has told his radio audience a terse story of its action.

Realizing that isolated people are intensely interested in books and plays, even when they have no opportunities to read and hear them, Miss Stewart herself broadcast reviews of books and plays which she had carefully prepared.

Day after day, night after night, this patient, earnest, gifted girl has sat at her desk in front of her set, improving, developing, suggesting, hoping, and dreaming. There is not space to detail all the splendid work she has performed, but without a doubt the well-balanced radio program which comes to you today is, in large measure, traceable to the efforts of this blind girl from a Pennsylvania farm.

ROSA STRIDER REILLY

A Church Which Pays Its Congregation to Come To It

Judging from the bundles in the Reverend Mr. Hassler's arms, some folks have just heard of his wonderful work with the Junior Church

SOMETIMES it is strawberry-ice-cream Sunday at the Hassler Junior Church in Indianapolis. Every once in a while it is popcorn-ball Sunday. And in winter, when all the little boys and girls seem to have colds in the head, there is a handkerchief Sunday, and every pupil gets a large, white handkerchief. It may be the first handkerchief that many of them have ever owned, for the Hassler Junior Church draws its congregation from among those who, in many cases, cannot afford shoes, and to whom even shirts are something of a luxury.

There was Willie, for instance—one of the first members of the class which the Reverend Anson Hassler organized five years ago. One winter day Willie came to Sunday school snugly fastened up in a ragged coat and a stocking cap, both of which he seemed loath to remove. The Reverend Mr. Hassler tries to teach his pupils good manners as well as Bible lessons; and he also feared that Willie would feel the out-of-door cold more than ever if he kept his coat on in the warm hall in which the class met. So he said:

"Willie, if you want to please me you will take off your hat and coat when you come in." And Willie did.

"After that I was more careful in making such suggestions," Dr. Hassler said, "for the child had nothing under his coat but a pair of suspenders."

It was for the Willies of Indianapolis that Anson Hassler, who is now past his seventy-seventh birthday, organized his Junior Church. His kindly blue eyes beam as he tells of its growth from a class of two pupils to a gathering that frequently exceeds three hundred. The first meeting, five years ago, was held over the ice-cream table in a corner drug-store. The meetings are now held at Cadle Tabernacle, a building constructed and given free to Indianapolis for use by religious gatherings as an ex-drunkard's memorial to his mother.

"After finishing my education at Heidelberg University I preached for fifty years," the white-haired pastor told me. "I also attended services in a great many different churches. And I noticed this fact about all of them—there didn't seem to be any *poor* people in the congregations. This worried me, and I kept thinking about it. Finally I figured that the reason poor folks did not go to church, was because they felt uncomfortable among the better dressed members of the congregation. Then, too, they had no money to help pay for the support of the church and that put them at a further disadvantage. 'What's needed more than anything else,' I said to myself, 'is a church where folks won't have to worry about clothes and contributions—where they can get religion free.'

"There was mighty little money to begin with, but I found an out-of-the-way hall which I could get rent free. The next step was to get a congregation. I felt that if I started a junior church I would, through the children, eventually reach the parents. Therefore, I made the rounds of the poorer neighborhoods inquiring for children of Sunday-school age. After I'd visited seven families I found twenty-five children who were not attending any Sunday school and who evinced great interest in mine. They all promised to come the following Sunday, and I went away full of hope. But when Sunday came, only two of them showed up. Of course, I couldn't hold much of a service with only two pupils, so I took them to the drug-store and treated them to ice cream. I told them to come again the next Sunday and to bring their friends.

"Evidently the prospect pleased them, for the second Sunday there were seven children, and the third, twenty-one. Instead of asking the children to bring pennies, I gave them a penny apiece, and a penny for each new pupil they brought. Later I substituted pencils and flags and handkerchiefs—something new each week, but nothing expensive, of course. Soon my work became known, and the newspapers began printing stories about it. Donations came to us—sometimes candy, sometimes clothing.

"A father was fitted out with respectable clothes so that he might come to church to see his two daughters baptized; motherless little girls were given warm dresses as well as spiritual advice; and tough little boys not only came themselves, but brought their pals and told their parents about this new kind of Sunday school; and, as a result, it has grown with gratifying rapidity. Donations of money from people in more comfortable circumstances help to support it.

"The purpose of the Junior Church is to do good in every possible way," Dr. Hassler explained, "without putting upon the children or their parents a single cent of expense. I teach them Christ and the Bible; I teach them to care for both body and soul, and to get the most out of life, wherever they live it."

LEONORA K. ROSS

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